ter, that the pendulum of life can swing from one extreme to the other. Yet even she might have lost faith had she been with Yvonne when the girl hurried from home after supper.

AT that hour, about half-past eight, though the night was pitch dark, one so accustomed to unhindered movement in any part of the village did not hesitate to take the short cut that led across the Aven by a footbridge and debouched by an alley on the main street not far from the Place. She was on the bridge, and a faint luminosity from the swirling waters beneath showed posts and rails with sufficient clarity. At that point she ran into two people, a man and a veiled woman, who emerged from the black shadow of a mill. The man was Rupert Fosdyke; but the woman was a stranger. Who could it be?

Suddenly some trick of carriage and bearing suggested Madeleine Demoret. Madeleine masquerading in modern attire! Madeleine without coif or collar! And Yvonne knew how a Breton maid shrinks from revealing herself to masculine gaze without her coif, which is the symbol of all that is pure.

In her dismay she nearly cried aloud to her friend. But the two had hurried on, vanishing in the direction of the Bois d'Amour. Sick at heart, she hastened to Madeleine's cottage, where the girl lived with an aunt.

"*Tiens!*" cried the woman, who looked up from the hearth when Yvonne entered. "Why isn't Madeleine with you? She went to Mère Pitou's half an hour ago."

"We've been to Moëlan," faltered Yvonne. I must have missed her. *Au revoir*, Madame Brissac."

"Oh, I cannot bear it!" cried Yvonne in an agony of shame when she was alone again in the darkness. "My mother! And now my friend! What shall I do? Is there none to help? How can I tell my father—or Lorry? Dear, lion-hearted Lorry! Surely I can trust him, and he will take that man in his strong hands and crush him!"

CHAPTER IX. Showing How Harvey Raymond Began the Attack

RAYMOND had too many irons in the fire that day to permit of the relaxation of mental and bodily energies that his condition demanded. It was essential to the success of a scheme now taking definite shape in his mind that he should seem to avoid Rupert Fosdyke's prying while maintaining a close surveillance on his movements. Thus, owing to the chance that he occupied a bedroom overlooking the Place, he knew when Fosdyke went out after changing the garments of ceremony worn that morning, and guessed quite accurately that an afternoon stroll would lead the younger man past Madeleine's cottage. He watched for the arrival of the solicitor's clerk from London, and witnessed Fosdyke's return soon after five o'clock. Then, realizing that the first of many formalities with regard to Carmac's will was in progress, he quitted his post, meaning to sit on the terrace until Fosdyke reappeared.

The weather, however, had turned cold, and he found an overcoat necessary. With the help of a servant he buttoned the coat in such wise that the empty right sleeve dangled as though he had lost a limb. As a consequence he was not instantly recognizable. Harry Jackson, seated patiently at the window behind the sycamores, failed to make out the identity of that small, ungainly figure until it had paced to and fro several times across the top of the small square.

A remarkable feature of a day rich in events fated to exercise a malefic influence on the lives of four people was provided by the fact that two men so opposite in characteristics as Harvey Raymond and Harry Jackson should have spent some hours in staring out from their respective apartments at the normal if picturesque panorama presented by the main thoroughfare of the village. Each was unaware of the other's vigil, each wholly unconscious of the part he was destined to play in a drama of love and death.

The secretary, of course, was nursing a project that could hardly fail to raise his fortunes to a height hitherto undreamed of, whereas the cheery-hearted steward, though his puzzled thoughts at times would have bothered Raymond far more than an occasional twinge of a broken arm did he but know their nature, was actually concerned about little else than his own future and the welfare of a mother dependent on his earnings. Still, it was odd that the sight of Raymond seldom failed to bring a perplexed frown to Jackson's face. The two had never met until the Stella sailed from Southampton water. They had not exchanged a word beyond the commonplaces of existence on board a yacht. Yet Jackson disliked Raymond, and, if minds were mirrors, the quasi-gentleman would have seen in the civil-spoken steward a mortal enemy; though none would be more surprised by the fact than the sturdy little Cockney himself.

Jackson felt rather lonely just then. Popple was occupied with an English-speaking representative of the Brest marine salvors, from whom he had hired a diver and a tug. Tollemache had vanished, being miles away at Moëlan with Yvonne and her father, and the changeful show beneath had lost some of its novelty in the eyes of the lively Londoner. He resented enforced inactivity. He wanted to be up and doing, bustling about like Popple; but that wretched ankle of his anchored him securely in bed or easy chair.

Thus there was nothing to distract his attention from Raymond's slow promenade beneath; and he speculated idly as to whom the secretary was awaiting—evidently someone from the annex, judging by the frequent glances cast that way.

AT last Jackson's harmless curiosity was gratified. Rupert Fosdyke, walking rapidly, hove in sight. The main door of the annex was not visible from the onlooker's window; but Raymond's unflagging patrol told him where the expected one would come from, and a close family likeness between uncle and nephew—notably in the dark, lustrous eyes, raven black hair, and pink and white skin—served as an effectual label. No cumbrous Brittany cart happened to be creaking noisily over the rough cobbles of the square. The gale had subsided. The window was open. Jackson could hear every word that passed. These were brief, and much to the point.

"Ah, Mr. Fosdyke!" said Raymond, affecting a pleased interest because of their chance meeting. "I'm glad I've run across you. What did you wish to say when we came back from Nizon?"

Fosdyke, staring with uncomprehending eyes at first, seemed to awake suddenly to the fact that his late uncle's secretary barred the way. "I've forgotten," he said slowly. "At present I want only to tell you to go to the devil!"

"Indeed!" Raymond jerked his head backward, as if he had been flicked with a whip on the cheek.

"Yes, truly."

"But what grounds for quarrel exist between us?"

"Quarrel? I'm not quarreling. I simply curse you."

"But why?"

"I feel like that, and you are a suitable object."

"Yet no breathing man could be better disposed toward you personally than myself."

"To blazes with you and your disposition!" was the amiable comment, and Fosdyke strode off into the gloom.

Raymond remained stock still until the tall, alert figure vanished round the bend where the houses surrounding the Place converge near the bridge. Then, with chin sunk into the collar of his coat, he went in the same direction.

Jackson was distinctly amused, even edified. "Well, I'm jiggered!" he chuckled. "If that ain't a nice, friendly w'y o' pawsing the time o' d'y—not 'arf! Real pire o' blighters, both of 'em!"

IT was of course much later in the evening when Yvonne, a prey to deep tribulation of spirit, entered her mother's suite. Mother and daughter invariably kissed now at meeting and parting. On this occasion each was nervous and distrait; Yvonne because of foreboding on Madeleine's account, and Mrs. Carmac by force of that vague and obscure subconsciousness which lurks ever behind the operations of the everyday mind, —that dim ghost as inseparable from the acknowledged senses as the shadow from the material body, yet impalpable as a shadow, and not to be defined in terms of human speech.

All day long had this specter peered over her shoulder. Its influence was affrighting and oppressive. The woman who had regarded her conscience as dumb and deaf and blind during nearly twenty years had suddenly discovered that the gagged and bound prisoner had become a most imperious master. Was it conscience, she wondered, that caused this disease? But conscience is a monitor that recalls past transgressions and threatens punishment, while her inward vision was aware rather of gloomy portents akin to that state of being fay, which is the unenviable attribute of the Celt. A Breton would understand, and dread; but, as Tollemache put it, the fumes of petrol seem to have banished such wraiths from that outer world in which Mrs. Carmac moved and had her being.

Even Yvonne's presence did not banish the phantom. Singularly enough, she and her mother, each weighed down by premonition of evil, looked more alike than ever, and each interpreted the other's distress by the light of her own disturbed thoughts. Yvonne, accustomed all her life to unfettered frankness, took it that her mother was saddened by her prolonged absence.

"I'm sorry, Dear, I could not reach you earlier," she explained. "My father came back from Concarneau this morning, and he looked so overtaxed and worried that I resolved to take him for a long walk. He and I and Lorry—Mr. Tollemache, you know—went miles and miles. That is our cure for the blues,—an infallible recipe. We arrived home rather late, but feeling ever so much better."

"Your face shows it, Yvonne," was the answer; though the quiet cynicism was softened by a wistful smile.

"Honestly we were lively as crickets during the second half of our tramp. But, where I am concerned, something that occurred during the last few minutes undid all the good. Tell me, Dear, what sort of man is Mr. Fosdyke?"

In the conditions few questions could have been more surprising. Her nephew's name was the last Mrs. Carmac expected to hear on Yvonne's lips, since the girl seldom alluded to him, and had shown by her manner that the handsome Rupert made slight appeal, if any.

"Why do you ask?" she said.

"You have heard me speak of Madeleine Demoret, a village girl, one of my greatest friends?"

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Fosdyke has made her acquaintance,—through me, as it happens,—and now he is meeting her constantly. They are together at this moment."

"Isn't that what one rather expects in village girls?" Mrs. Carmac, borne down by her own ills, could spare scant sympathy for any flighty maiden who had fallen victim to the fascinations of her good-looking relative.

"It may be so elsewhere, but not in Brittany," persisted Yvonne, who was keen-witted enough to understand how differently she and a woman of her mother's world might view Madeleine's folly. "Here such behavior is unforgivable. A girl may not walk out with the man to whom she is engaged, far less with a stranger. I—I hardly know how to act. You cannot imagine how completely her friends and neighbors will condemn poor Madeleine if it is spread abroad that she was seen in Mr. Fosdyke's company. As for Peridot, if he knew, he would kill him!"

"Kill Rupert?"

"Yes."

"Peridot may find consolation elsewhere."

Yvonne winced; but she had a purpose in mind, and persevered bravely. "Oh, please don't say such things!" she said. "I want you, Dear, to try and look at this affair through my eyes. I know my Bretons, and Madeleine must be saved, in spite of herself. Can you persuade Mr. Fosdyke to leave Pont Aven tomorrow?"

"He is going: not tomorrow, perhaps, but soon."

"Are you sure—quite sure?"

"He told me so himself today."

"If I could be certain he would go, I wouldn't speak to Lorry."

"How does it affect Mr. Tollemache? Is he too an admirer of Madeleine's?"

Then, despite her perplexities, Yvonne laughed. "No, of course not," she cried. "Didn't I imply that Peridot means to marry her?"

"In that event why appeal to Mr. Tollemache?"

"Oh, I see your difficulty now. When aroused Lorry is a very convincing person indeed. He would tell Mr. Fosdyke to 'quit,'—that is exactly what he would say,—and if Mr. Fosdyke didn't quit he'd jolly well make him—which is also what Lorry would say."

Mrs. Carmac seemed to consider the point for a few seconds. "My difficulties, as you put it, cover a larger area," she said with a bitterness that had its pathetic side. "Don't forget, Yvonne, that I am debarred from sharing your confidence. Dare I ask, for instance, if at some future date you will probably become Mrs. Laurence Tollemache?"

The girl flushed under this wholly unexpected thrust. First her father, now her mother, had voiced such a far-fetched notion! "I don't know," she said simply. "The events of the last week have taught me the unwisdom of thinking that we can forecast the future; but I can say now, with the utmost candor, that I will never leave my father."

AT the moment she had no other thought than a disavowal of her prospective marriage with Tollemache, or any other man; but her mother cowered as though flinching from a blow, and Yvonne was instantly aware that the words had conveyed a meaning far beyond their intent.

"Oh, dear!" she sighed. "How easily one can be misunderstood! Now it is stupid that you and I should be at cross purposes in a matter of this sort. Will it help if I tell you what my father said this morning? He asked me why you had decided that Mr. Carmac should be buried here, and I gave it as my opinion that you meant to remain in Pont Aven a considerable time. Was I mistaken?"

The older woman's face became a shade whiter; but she replied steadily enough, "Something of the sort had certainly occurred to me."

"But you must abandon it, Dear," said the girl earnestly, dropping at her mother's feet, and taking one thin hand in both hers. "If you do that, everything will go wrong. Dad and you cannot possibly live in a small place like this, where everybody knows everybody else, where the history of each family or individual is common property, and where gossip would soon find flaws in the pretense that you and I are aunt and niece. If you continue to reside here, it means that Dad and I must go. No, you sha'n't weep, or be allowed to fret yourself into some misleading notion as to what I really mean. Once and for all, the possibility of that kind of lamentable thing happening must disappear.

"Dad is a fair-minded man,—I don't think his enemies, if he had any, would deny that,—and he admits that it would be cruel to keep you and me apart now that we have been brought together in such an extraordinary way. He will let me come and visit you often, I